

The Marble House

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## The Marble House<sup>1</sup>

BY EDWARD C. DELAVAN, JR.

The destruction of the Hotel Castleton by fire, on the evening of November 12, 1907, led to the discovery, in the foundation, of numerous blocks of dolomite, which had been so utilized after St. Marks Hotel was demolished, about the year 1889.

St. Marks Hotel may be remembered as a square stone building with a later frame addition extending toward the south. This square stone building was formerly known as the Marble House, or as the Mansion House of Mrs. Arietta Thompson. The stone used in its construction, as the writer was informed by the late Mrs. Hannah E. Westervelt, a sister of Mrs. Thompson, was brought from the Kingsbridge quarry.

The Marble House was built for Mrs. Arietta Thompson, wife of Gilbert Livingston Thompson and daughter of Daniel D. Tompkins, and its construction was commenced probably prior to 1821. The great brownstone gate posts, two of which remain in their original location,<sup>2</sup> and the wall between them, along the northeasterly side of St. Marks Place, are probably of a date later than 1835.

This venerable building was so closely associated with the history of New Brighton, that the writer may be pardoned if he goes with some degree of detail into the events which preceded and led up to its construction.

As early as the year 1623 the locality now called Tompkinsville was known as "the watering place" (14 Col. Doc. 506). Here outward bound vessels stopped to fill their casks from the brook, which flowing from the thickly wooded hills and fed by constant springs, afforded a copious supply of cold pure water. With the progress of settlement cultivated fields began to dot

<sup>1</sup> Presented January 18, 1908.

<sup>2</sup> These two gate posts have since been removed.



the landscape, but axe and plow had made little inroad upon the hillsides when the British fleet entered the harbor in the summer of 1776.

The watering place lay in a tract devised in 1718 by Ellis Duxbury to the Minister Church Wardens and Vestry of St. Andrew in the County of Richmond, and later known as Duxbury Glebe. In 1765 the Church leased the glebe to Dr. John Bard of New York City for a term of fifty-four years. (D Deeds 609.)

To the west along the Kill Van Kull, the Dorland Patent lay, and it is known to have been in the possession of Solomon Comes about the year 1748 (106 N. Y. 1, 21), but his fate and the disposition made by him of his property remain undiscovered by the writer.

In 1769 John Wandell owned a five acre tract bounded on the west by the Jersey Street brook, which in later years became known as the distillery lot; also an adjoining strip thirty-five paces wide, on the opposite side of the brook, which is referred to in the mortgage made by him as the lot "whereon stands a certain bark mill and tan pits." (B Mgs. 16.) It is said that the remains of old vats have been discovered on the north side of Richmond Terrace, east of Jersey Street; Mr. John Seaton and the late Silas N. Havens having informed the writer that they had seen these uncovered when excavations were made for the buildings erected by Edward Reilly soon after the year 1869, but it is uncertain whether these were used for the purposes of a distillery, or for the earlier tannery.

The Philip Welles Patent had been partitioned by the Van Tuyl family into three longitudinal strips, of which the easternmost was purchased in 1775 by John Amerman; the middle strip was owned by Wilhelmus Vreeland, while the westernmost part had come into the possession of Hendrick Van Tuyl and Cornelius Vanderbilt. (B Mgs. 235; D Deeds 315; D Deeds 450.) The farm adjoining the Glebe on the south, fronting the bay, had been devised in 1734 by the Rev. David De Bonrepos, minister to the French congregation, to David, son of Alexander De Bonrepos.

of New York. The writer has so far failed to discover what became of David the devisee. (12 Wills 175, N. Y.) This land probably came into the possession of the Corsen family prior to the Revolution. The northern twenty acres were in possession of Derby Doyle, the ferryman, in 1770. (B Mgs. 43.)

South of the DeBonrepos farm the McLean family seemed to have occupied the land nearly if not quite down to St. Mary's Church in Clifton. (C Deeds 54.)

The invading forces disembarked on Staten Island. The territory surrounding the watering place became a great camp. (5 Harper's Enc. of U. S. Hist. 471.) Fences and standing timber were converted into firewood and building material, until bald hills surmounted by redoubts and rolling commons bare of grass alone remained. (1 Morris, 313, 314, 315.)

The close of the revolution found the two farms on the south and west in the possession of Gozen Ryerss, who was county judge from 1797 to 1802 and who sold the former, being the Derby Doyle parcel, to Abraham Van Duzer, and the latter (or all but six acres of the Dorland Patent), to Cornelius Van Buskirk. (E Deeds 367; 328.)

Under the authority of Chapter 19 of the Laws of 1799, thirty acres of land at the watering place were taken in the following year by the State of New York, in the exercise of the right of eminent domain, for the purpose of a marine hospital, and of this tract five acres were subsequently conveyed to the United States. These parcels became known as the Quarantine Ground and the United States Ground, respectively. (Map No. 1; G Deeds 379.)

At about this time Aaron Burr, actively engaged in consolidating the Bucktails of New York into the effective, if undesirable political force since known as Tammany Hall, and in ending the regime of the old landed aristocracy represented by the Clintons, found an able and ambitious lieutenant in Daniel D. Tompkins, upon whom Burr's mantle fell when he left New York after the duel with Alexander Hamilton in 1804. A judge at thirty years of age, sharing the bench with the learned James Kent, and elected governor of the State of New York in 1807, the rise of Daniel D. Tompkins was no less rapid than brilliant.



It was in the year 1807 that the Clermont made her successful trip to Albany at the rate of nearly five miles an hour. The legislature confirmed a grant to Livingston and Fulton of the monopoly of navigation in the waters of the State of New York by steam-propelled vessels. It was believed that transportation was revolutionized, and that thereafter the steamboat would afford a cheaper and more comfortable means of conveyance than the stage. The development of the railroad was not foreseen.

The war of 1812 necessitated the strengthening of the defences of New York. Some of the old revolutionary redoubts were restored and new forts were erected on Staten Island, under the personal supervision of Governor Tompkins.

Attracted by the beauty of the landscape and convinced of the accessibility of the north and east shores of Staten Island from New York by the new means of transit, Governor Tompkins in 1814 bought the Van Buskirk farm, the farm which had been conveyed by Amerman's heirs to Abraham Crocheron, and part of the Vreeland farm. (G Deeds 393, 382.)

In the same year a law was passed permitting St. Andrew's to sell the Glebe, the act reciting "that the reason of the distant situation of the said glebe from the church, it is not convenient to the minister and incumbent of said church, to occupy and improve the same himself, by reason whereof the said glebe hath got out of repair, and the wood and timber thereof has been carried off or destroyed, in consequence of which the same cannot be leased to great advantage \* \* \*." (Chapter 15 Laws of 1814.)

Pursuant to this act the Church in 1815 conveyed to Daniel D. Tompkins all of the Glebe now lying north of the Richmond Turnpike (G Deeds 443), and a large portion of that lying south of the Turnpike. (G Deeds 396; see H Deeds 64.)

On the high hill near the middle of the Van Buskirk farm stood the redoubt which, as I have been informed by Edward C. Bridgeman, Esq., son-in-law of the late Daniel Low, a former owner of part of the property, bore the name of Fort Knyphausen. In relation to this it is important to notice that the spring in the valley below is still called the Hessian Spring. Governor Tomp-



kins chose a point just southeast of this fort as the site of the mansion which he erected, and in which he resided up to the time of his death. His house was owned and occupied for many years by the late Dr. John S. Westervelt, and was destroyed by fire in the year 1874. It stood slightly southwest of the present home of Mrs. L. Benziger on Fort Street, better known as Fort Place. The location of the old building is indicated on Plate 4, Beer's Atlas of Staten Island.

The year 1816 was marked by many important events in the History of Staten Island. On March 31, the legislature of the State of New York incorporated the "Richmond Turnpike Company", by which company the road still known as the Richmond Turnpike was laid out and opened from Arrietta Street to the new Blazing Star ferry, its purpose being to shorten the stage route between New York and Philadelphia.

On September 14, Daniel D. Tompkins acquired an interest in the steamboat monopoly of Livingston and Fulton. (*Gibbons vs. Ogden* 17 Johnson 488, 491.) In October the small tract lying in the south glebe, and bounded northerly by Arrietta Street and Richmond Turnpike, west by Sarah Ann Street, south by Van Duzer's land, and east by the Bay of New York, was divided into lots upon a map made by Uzal W. Freeman (Map No. 2). The location of Nautilus Hall is indicated on this map, and it was probably erected about this time; a triangle is also shown on which there was later erected the brick edifice of the Dutch Reformed Church which was recently torn down. Among the first grantees of the lots laid down on this map we find the names of De Forest, Murray, Van Duzer, Standerwick, Van Clief, Harcourt, Perine, Martino, Jarvis, Burger, Eddy, Guyon, Lockman, Van Beuren, and "John Gough of Albany, steward of the steamboat Richmond". (*H Deeds* 267.) In November Daniel D. Tompkins was elected vice president of the United States under James Monroe.

The steam ferry boat Nautilus, owned in whole or in part by Daniel D. Tompkins (*Clute*, 318), is said to have begun her service between Staten Island and Whitehall wharf in New York on November 29, 1817. (*2 Morris* 264.)



"The North Village of Tompkinsville" was laid out upon a map made by John T. Ludlam in 1819, on which map the Quarantine Ground is shown as bounded on the north by Fountain Street, probably as that street was laid out and opened under an act of the legislature of the preceding year. This street was named in honor of Garret Fountain, who had bought a piece of land bounded thereon. Its eastern end is now known as South Street. The tract so laid out on the map of 1819 was bounded on the west by Tompkins Street, and therefore lay entirely in the north glebe.

In the north section of this map we find a plot of some six or seven acres bounded north by Livingston Street, south by Thompson Street, west by Tompkins street, and easterly by the Bay of New York. This was the site of the Marble House.

In 1820 Daniel D. Tompkins was reelected vice president of the United States.

A new map was made by John T. Ludlam in February, 1821, upon which a building is indicated as standing on the site mentioned, from which it may be inferred that the Marble House was certainly contemplated, probably commenced and possibly completed prior to that time.

Mr. Tompkins had signed and acknowledged a deed conveying the site in question to his daughter Mrs. Thompson, but, probably owing to financial embarrassments, this deed was never delivered. (*Thompson v. Hammond*, 1 Edwards Ch. 497.) During the year 1821 many judgments were entered against him, including one in favor of his father-in-law, Mangle Minthorne, for over \$25,000. In 1822 Mr. Tompkins made an assignment for the benefit of the creditors. (159 Deeds 8, N. Y.) In 1823 St. Andrew's Church foreclosed the mortgage given by Mr. Tompkins covering the north glebe, and on the foreclosure sale the property was bought in by the Church. (K Deeds, 124.)

In February 1824 the Supreme Court of the United States declared the laws of the State of New York creating a steamboat monopoly to be unconstitutional. (*Gibbons v. Ogden*, 9 Wheaton 1.)



Mangle Minthorne died on April 20, 1824. In the following June St. Andrew's Church reconveyed the north glebe to Daniel D. Tompkins (K Deeds 383), who soon thereafter refunded to Gilbert Livingston Thompson the sum of \$2,500, which Mangle Minthorne had advanced to Arietta M. Thompson, and which had been used in the construction of the Marble House. (Thompson v. Hammond.)

Gilbert L. Thompson claimed from Daniel D. Tompkins the sum of \$16,539.92 "due for the costs and expenses and amount actually paid advanced and expended by him the said Gilbert L. Thompson, on which the said Gilbert L. Thompson had become legally liable and about the erecting building and improving a certain house, outhouses and premises thereunto belonging and situated near the Quarantine Ground of the County of Richmond."

Daniel D. Tompkins claimed that the said Gilbert L. Thompson was indebted to him for money paid, laid out and advanced and expended by him to and for Gilbert L. Thompson, or for his use or for the value or amount of property goods and chattels belonging to him, the said Daniel D. Tompkins, and by him delivered to the said Gilbert L. Thompson and not by him returned.

These conflicting claims were submitted by the parties for arbitration and the arbitrator awarded to Gilbert L. Thompson the full amount of the claim, \$16,539.92, on March 16, 1825.

Daniel D. Tompkins in the following June brought suit against Gilbert L. Thompson, and obtained an injunction, but died three days later. (3 Chancery Clerks Register 95, N. Y.)

The following notice is copied from the Evening Post of Monday, June 13, 1825.

#### DIED

At his residence on Staten Island, Saturday evening last after a long and painful illness, Daniel D. Tompkins Esq., late Vice President of the United States, in the 51st year of his age.

The senate of the State of New York, the corporation of the City, the judges of the different courts, the members of the New York Bar, the officers of the grand lodge, and his friends and acquaintances, are respectively invited to attend the funeral this afternoon at five o'clock, from the steamboat wharf at Whitehall. Carriages will be in waiting on the arrival of the steamboat Nautilus from Staten Island.



Mr. Tompkins left surviving him his widow Hannah, and the following named persons as his only named heirs at law:

1. Griffen Tompkins.
2. Arietta Minthorne, wife of Gilbert L. Thompson.
3. Hannah E., wife of Dr. John S. Westervelt.
4. Sarah A., who married Archibald Gordon.
5. Minthorne Tompkins.
6. Daniel H. Tompkins.
7. Susannah M., who married Richard Smith.
8. Ray Tompkins.

Upon the award of the arbitrator before mentioned, Gilbert L. Thompson obtained judgment against the administrators of the estate of Daniel D. Tompkins on March 15, 1828, for \$16,539.92 debt and \$3,250 damages and costs. (N. Y. County Clerks Judgment Docket.)

The judgment obtained by Mangle Minthorne was, at the instance of the executors of his will, received by scire facias on the 12th day of August, 1829, against the heirs and terre-tenants of Daniel D. Tompkins, and a writ of testatum fieri facias, dated the 15th of the same month, was directed to the sheriff of Richmond County, commanding him to sell all the north glebe, except a few small parcels sold by Mr. Tompkins. The sale under this execution was from time to time adjourned, until Gilbert L. Thompson procured an injunction restraining the sheriff from selling the site of the Marble House. On Jan. 4, 1830, the sheriff sold the land described in the execution, except the said site, to Charles C. Young. Stephen Cleveland, as the assignee of a junior judgment, redeemed the land so sold and received from the sheriff a deed bearing date April 5, 1831 (T Deeds, 182; V Deeds, 482), which however, expressly excepted the site covered by the injunction, by the following description, namely:

"All that certain piece or parcel of land with the building thereon, now occupied and claimed by Gilbert Livingston Thompson, which piece or parcel or land is bounded on the north by Livingston Street as laid down on the map of the lands of the late Daniel D. Tompkins known as the boundary lines between

the lands of Philip Van Buskirk and the glebe of St. Andrew's Church, on the south by Thompson Street as laid down on the same map, and on the east by the Bay of New York, containing seven acres, be the same more or less (the said grantee alleging that the said property excepted as claimed by Gilbert Livingston Thompson should have been described as claimed by Mrs. Gilbert Livingston Thompson)."

The injunction so obtained by Gilbert Livingston Thompson was subsequently dissolved, and the sheriff accordingly and on the thirtieth day of September, 1833, sold the site of the Marble House under the same execution to Minthorne Tompkins and Daniel H. Tompkins and delivered to them his certificate of sale. This certificate was, on the 21st day of October, 1834, assigned to Thomas E. Davis. (Y Deeds, 212.)

But as we have seen, Gilbert L. Thompson had recovered judgment in 1828 for over \$16,500 against the administrators of the estate of Daniel D. Tompkins. In April, 1829, he and Stephen Cleveland were appointed trustees of Mrs. Thompson's separate estate, and the aforesaid judgment was assigned to Stephen Cleveland. In July, 1829, Mr. Tompkins' assignees conveyed to Cleveland all the real estate in Richmond County assigned to them by Daniel D. Tompkins, Cleveland admitting his trusteeship for Mrs. Thompson and the assignees agreeing to credit \$2,500 on the said judgment. In September, 1835, Mrs. Thompson and her trustees conveyed the site of the Marble House to Thomas E. Davis. (Y Deeds, 212.)

A confirmatory deed had been made under the direction of the Court of Chancery by St. Andrew's Church to Mrs. Thompson's trustee, in which the antecedent proceedings were set forth with great particularity. (Y Deeds, 498.)

It may be observed that the great brown gate posts and the wall between them, stand upon the present curved line of St. Marks Place, and not upon the old straight line of Tompkins Street as laid down on the map of 1819. It may be inferred from this that they were built at a considerably later period than the house, probably after the map of the New Brighton Association was made in 1835.



From Thomas E. Davis title to the property passed to the short-lived New Brighton Association and back through foreclosure to Davis, who conveyed it to Samuel M. Fox. Subsequent owners were Theodosius O. Fowler, Victor Y. Fourgeaud and August Belmont, the latter of whom conveyed it to Cornelius Vanderbilt. It then passed into the hands of a syndicate, and was later successively sold to Frederick E. Gibert, Frederick Lachmeyer, and George C. Tallman, and passed to the latter's legal representatives on his death. The Marble House was demolished about the year 1889, in order to make room for the Hotel Castleton.

#### LIST OF MAPS.

1. Map of the Quarantine Ground 1799, Map No. 1. Richmond County Clerk's office.

2. "Map of a Parcel of Ground, the Property of His Exc'y Daniel D. Tompkins situated adjacent to the Quarantine Ground on Staten Island, surveyed and made October, 1816, by Uzal W. Freeman, City Surveyor." Map No. 2 (copy) R. C. C. office.

3. "Map of property situated at Staten Island, belonging to Daniel D. Tompkins, July 16, 1819. Surveyed by John T. Ludlam." In the possession of the City of New York, and filed in the Richmond Borough Hall.

4. "Map of property situated at Staten Island adjoining the Quarantine belonging to Daniel D. Tompkins, New York, February 27, 1821. Surveyed by John T. Ludlam." In the possession of Mr. Edward Wanty, St. Pauls Ave., Tompkinsville, S. I.

5. Map made under the direction of the Master in Chancery in *Lake vs. Tompkins* and *U. S. Bank vs. Tompkins* and *Van Buskirk vs. Tompkins*, 1823, by E. W. Bridges. K deeds 127, 429. Not found.

6. Map of land heretofore belonging to Daniel D. Tompkins by Edward Doughty, 1829. Y deeds 212. Not found.

7. Map signed by Thomas Lawrence, George Howard, J. S. Harrison and James Guyon. Y deeds 212. Not found.

8. "Map of Grounds situated at Tompkinsville, Staten Island, the property of Caleb T. Ward, showing the adjoining lands be-

longing to The Heirs of Daniel D. Tompkins and others, New York, February 22, 1829. Compiled from various surveys by E. W. Bridges, C. Surveyor." In the possession of Mr. Wanty. With another detailed map of a smaller part of the above, of same date, marked "A."

9. Map of property of Arietta M. Thompson, by John J. Soulé, April 26, 1834. X deeds 1. Y deeds 212. Not found.

10. "Staten Island Map of New Brighton Property, belonging to the New Brighton Association in the town of Castleton, County of Richmond, State of New York. Drawn and surveyed by J. Lyons, 1835." Map No. 12, in the Richmond County Clerk's Office.

11. "New Brighton Atlas, by J. Lyons, City Surveyor," 1835. In the possession of the Title Insurance Company of New York.

12. "Map of Edgewater and part of New Brighton, Staten Island, New York, showing old farm lines, Streets, Avenues, and lots, etc., from actual surveys from George M. Root, August, 1866." Map No. 1000 in the Richmond County Clerk's Office.



## Chemical Analysis of Cretaceous Amber from Kreischerville <sup>1</sup>

By ARTHUR HOLLICK

Specimens of amber from the Androvette pit at Kreischerville were subjected to chemical analysis by Dr. William J. Gies of Columbia University, at my request, and he reports that the material is typical amber or succinite, so far as chemical composition is concerned. Amber oil, containing succinic acid, was obtained by destructive distillation, and a number of determinations of elementary composition yielded the following data:

Carbon .....	77.87
Oxygen .....	12.57
Hydrogen .....	9.11
Sulphur .....	0.35
Ash .....	0.10
	<hr/>
	100.00
Volatile matter at 100° C.....	0.40
(Nitrogen and phosphorus absent.)	

which agrees with the data relating to succinite as determined by various observers.

<sup>1</sup>Presented January 18, 1908.



Photomount  
Pamphlet  
Binder  
Gaylord Bros. Inc.  
Makers  
Syracuse, N. Y.  
PAT. JAN 21, 1908



